

## **Testimony in Support of Establishing a Legal Framework for Complementary Wellness Practitioners in the State of Maryland**

My name is Kimberly Smith, and I am a Licensed Massage Therapist (LMT) who has been practicing in the state of Maryland since 2009. I graduated from massage therapy school in 2002 and have spent more than two decades working to support the health and wellbeing of individuals in my community.

In March 2015, I graduated from Trinity School of Natural Health, where I received certifications as a Doctor of Naturopathy (ND), Master Herbalist (MH), Master Iridologist (MI), Certified Nutritional Consultant (CNC), Certified Health Specialist (CHS), and Certified Natural Health Professional (CNHP). In November 2015, I also became board certified through the American Naturopathy Medical Certification Board as a Board Certified Doctor of Natural Medicine.

To further strengthen my education in wellness-focused nutritional support, I completed the Nutritional Therapy Practitioner (NTP) certification through the Nutritional Therapy Association (NTA) in September 2025. This training focused on foundational nutrition, lifestyle balance, and non-medical wellness support approaches.

After completing this education, I learned that Maryland only allows licensure for naturopathy if the practitioner graduates from a state-approved accredited naturopathic medical school. While I respect the state's responsibility to regulate licensed medical professions and protect the public, this situation revealed a much broader issue affecting many practitioners across Maryland.

Across the United States there are hundreds of complementary wellness modalities that support individuals in improving their overall wellbeing. These include nutritional therapy, herbal education, lifestyle wellness coaching, energy-based wellness practices, traditional healing approaches, and other holistic methods that focus on supporting the body's natural balance.

Most of these modalities are taught through certification programs rather than medical degree programs. They are typically non-invasive and focused on wellness support rather than diagnosing or treating disease. Because they fall outside the traditional medical licensing structure, many of these practices do not have formal licensing boards.

Unfortunately, in Maryland many trained practitioners who have invested significant time and resources in legitimate education programs find themselves operating in a legal gray area. Even when practitioners clearly avoid diagnosing or treating disease, they may risk being accused of practicing naturopathic medicine or another licensed healthcare profession without a license.

Complementary wellness services are widely used across the United States. National research shows that more than one-third of American adults use some form of complementary health approach, and Americans spend more than \$30 billion each year on these services. Based on these national trends, it is reasonable to estimate that hundreds of complementary wellness

practitioners operate throughout Maryland today, serving thousands of residents who seek lifestyle-focused wellness support.

Creating a clear legal framework for complementary wellness practitioners would provide several important benefits for Maryland.

First, it would improve consumer protection by requiring transparency and written disclosure explaining the nature of services provided.

Second, it would support consumer choice by allowing Maryland residents to access wellness services from trained practitioners operating within clearly defined boundaries.

Third, it would provide regulatory clarity by distinguishing wellness support from licensed medical practice and explicitly prohibiting diagnosing disease, prescribing medications, or performing invasive procedures.

Fourth, it would support small businesses and local economic activity by allowing complementary wellness practitioners to operate responsibly and transparently.

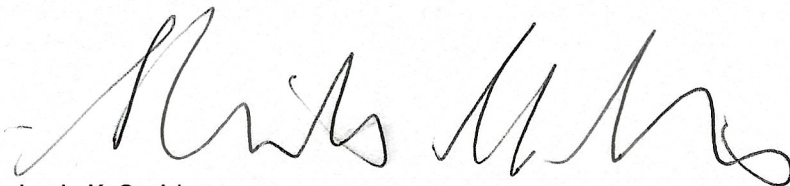
Finally, Maryland would not be alone in addressing this issue. Several states have already enacted laws that create legal frameworks for complementary wellness practitioners, including Minnesota, Arizona, California, Rhode Island, Oklahoma, and New Mexico.

This proposal does not expand the practice of medicine. It simply creates a responsible legal space for non-medical wellness practitioners to operate transparently while respecting the important role of licensed healthcare professionals.

In closing, I respectfully encourage the state of Maryland to consider establishing a clear regulatory pathway for complementary wellness practitioners that strengthens consumer protection while allowing responsible wellness services to exist.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly K. Smith', written in a cursive style.

Kimberly K. Smith

LMT/NTP/Board Certified Doctor of Natural Medicine

Bowie, Maryland

kksmith40@verizon.net